

Draft Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan



DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK • CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA

*Produced as a Component of the
Northern and Eastern Mojave Planning Effort*

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**Draft
General Management Plan
Environmental Impact Statement**

**Death Valley National Park
Inyo and San Bernardino Counties, California
Nye and Esmeralda Counties, Nevada**

This *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* presents the proposed management approach and two alternatives for the management of the 3.3 million-acre Death Valley National Park in the northeastern Mojave Desert in California and Nevada. Death Valley is the largest national park unit in the contiguous U.S., created by Congress October 31, 1994 through the California Desert Protection Act (CDPA). This General Management Plan serves as the initial overall management strategy for the next 10–15 years under which more detailed activity or implementation plans would be prepared. As such, a GMP is general rather than specific in nature, and focuses on purposes of the unit, its significant attributes, its mission in relation to the overall mission of the agency, what activities are appropriate within these constraints, and resource protection strategies. It also provides guidelines for visitor use and development of facilities for visitor enjoyment and administration of the unit.

The proposed action (alternative 1) seeks to extend the existing management strategies that are in place for the previous National Monument, and the NPS mission and policies, to the management of the resources within the new lands added to the unit in 1994 by the California Desert Protection Act. It also strives to incorporate the designation of 95% of the park as wilderness into the management approach. This alternative addresses the removal of feral burros and horses from the park in order to achieve the NPS mission of managing the unit for native desert species. It also recognizes the need to work cooperatively with the Bureau of Land Management on adjacent land, where their mandate from Congress is to maintain viable herds of wild horses and burros. This alternative attempts to balance the preservation of resources mission with specific mandates from Congress. In Death Valley, the California Desert Protection Act provides for the continuation of grazing on the new lands. This alternative addresses grazing as a component of the management. This plan identifies a number of activity level plans needed to address site specific issues, such as the Saline Valley Warm Springs management and a backcountry/wilderness management plan. This alternative seeks funding for purchase of private property from willing sellers, and/or mineral interests where proposed uses conflict with the primary mission of preserving resources and providing for visitor enjoyment.

In addition to the proposal (alternative 1), two other alternatives in this document include the existing management (alternative 2) and an optional management approach (alternative 3). The existing management alternative describes the continuation of current management strategies. It is commonly referred to as the no action, or status quo alternative. Under this alternative, existing visitor and administrative support services and facilities would be maintained in their current locations. There would be no changes in existing number or location of structures. There would be no change in road maintenance, although some roads could be improved if funding becomes available. No changes in recreation use would occur. Land acquisition would focus on obtaining funds to acquire private property and mineral interests from willing sellers only where proposed uses conflict with the park mission. The optional approach (alternative 3) provides for approval of the use of airstrips at Saline Valley Warm Springs, designating campsites at the Warm Springs, and specifies acquisition of private land or mineral interests only in sensitive habitats and the phase out of the concession operation at Stovepipe Wells.

The 90-day opportunity for public comment during this phase of the conservation planning and impact analysis process starts with the Environmental Protection Agency filing a notice of availability in the *Federal Register*. All review comments must be received by that time and should be addressed to:

Superintendent
Death Valley National Park
Death Valley, CA 92328

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR • NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
IN COOPERATION WITH**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR • BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT / U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The manuscript has been written three times, and each rewriting has discovered errors. Many must still remain; the improvement of the part is sacrificed to the completion of the whole. The correction of errors will be welcomed.

Will Durant, *The History of Civilization*, Volume IV, The Age of Faith

